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SUBJECT: TFH01: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH MEXICAN A/S FOR
LATIN AMERICA

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

1, (C) Summary. The Ambassador met on November 20 with Mexican Foreign Ministry Assistant Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean Salvador Beltran, who was visiting Honduras to conduct an assessment of the political atmosphere on the ground days before the November 29 general election. Beltran told the Ambassador that President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya had asked Mexican President Felipe Calderon to raise the issue of the Honduran election with the U.S. President. Beltran said he understood that Zelaya wanted the election postponed, but that Mexico believes this is not possible. Beltran said that while Mexico's official position is that it will not recognize the outcome of the election while the de facto regime is in place, in fact it will do so if the process is free, fair and transparent. The Ambassador told Beltran that the U.S. continues to urge implementation of the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord and that it would be important to once again bring together the accord's Verification Commission in order to establish a unity government. The Ambassador said the U.S. believes the elections are an important part of the solution to the crisis. The Ambassador and Beltran agreed that it would be best if de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti did not return to power after his temporary leave of absence. End Summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by PolCouns, met on November 20 with Salvador Beltran, the Mexican Foreign Ministry's Assistant Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, who was accompanied by Charge d'Affaires Carlos Torres. Beltran said the purpose of his visit to Honduras was to get a sense of the atmosphere on the ground days before the general election scheduled for November 29. Beltran said he would meet with former President of Honduras Carlos Flores; Arturo Corrales, Micheletti's representative on the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord Verification Commission; Victor Meza, one of President Zelaya's negotiators at the Guaymuras Dialogue that led to the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord; Amilcar Bulnes, President of the Honduran National Business Council (COHEP); Jose Alfredo Saavedra, who replaced Micheletti as President of the Congress after the coup; and presidential candidates Elvin Santos of the Liberal Party and Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo of the National Party.

13. (C) Torres told the Ambassador that the de facto regime had refused permission for Beltran to have a meeting with President Zelaya at the Brazilian Embassy and requested the Ambassador's assistance. The Ambassador called Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Romeo Orlando Vasquez and asked him to intercede with the de facto regime to see if he could facilitate the meeting.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador told Beltran that the U.S. views Micheletti's announcement that he will take a temporary leave of absence as a positive development. He stated that the U.S. continues to urge implementation of the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord. He added that the international community needs to demand that Congress' consideration of Zelaya's restoration to office, currently scheduled for December 2, be totally transparent. The Ambassador said it would be best if Micheletti did not return to power after his temporary absence. Beltran agreed and said the optimal scenario would be for Zelaya to be restored to office on December 2 so he could transfer the presidential sash to the victor of the presidential election. Beltran added that Micheletti's return to power would be an obstacle to acceptance of the new government in Latin America due his image as the leader of the coup. The Ambassador suggested that Beltran deliver that message during his meeting with Saavedra, who is extremely close to Micheletti.

¶5. (C) Beltran told the Ambassador that Meza had told him there had been some contact between President Zelaya and National Party presidential contender and front-runner Lobo. The Ambassador responded that he would not be surprised if there were such contact because Zelaya wants to remain in Honduras, but that he doubted that Lobo would enter into a deal with Zelaya before the election due to concerns that it would leak to his constituents, many of whom are anti-Zelaya. The Ambassador agreed that Lobo does not want to receive the presidential sash from Micheletti, and would seek to cooperate with us on this issue.

TEGUCIGALP 00001200 002 OF 002

Elections

¶6. (C) Beltran told the Ambassador that during a phone call on November 16 between Mexican President Felipe Calderon and President Zelaya, Zelaya asked Calderon to raise the issue of elections with President Obama and to have Mexican Foreign Affairs Minister Patricia Espinosa raise it with the Secretary. Beltran added that Meza told him on November 19 that Zelaya had made the same request of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Beltran said he understood that Zelaya wants the elections postponed, but that Mexico does not believe this is possible. Beltran expressed concern that some countries, like Argentina and Brazil, are questioning the legitimacy of the electoral process before it takes place. He said he does not believe that the Organization of American States (OAS) can declare the elections illegitimate beforehand. He said Mexico would view such an action by the OAS as violating the sovereignty of Honduras. Beltran told the Ambassador that the elections provide an excellent opportunity for Honduras to move forward. He said Mexico's official position is that it will not recognize the elections with the de facto regime in place, but that in fact Mexico will recognize the outcome of the elections unless they are beset by serious irregularities. Beltran added that the international community cannot condemn Honduras to years of isolation and economic regression. He noted that some Mexican congressmen may travel to Honduras to watch the elections.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador told Beltran that the U.S. also believes that the elections are an important part of the solution to the crisis. He added that the president-elect could play an important part in bringing out the restoration of President Zelaya to office. The Ambassador noted that, while it is important for the U.S. to remain within the framework of the OAS, the U.S. wants to help Honduras hold free, fair and transparent elections and to that end had provided technical assistance to the electoral process. Beltran said the Honduran Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) requested technical support from the Mexican Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), but that he did not know the

outcome.

Unity Government

18. (C) The Ambassador told Beltran that it would be important to once again bring together the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord's Verification Commission in order to establish a unity government. The Ambassador said Micheletti had acted in bad faith by sending a letter to Zelaya on November 3 requesting his suggestions for members of the unity government, thereby indicating that Micheletti would lead such a government, and by subsequently unilaterally announcing its creation. The Ambassador said Zelaya should have referred the issue to the Verification Commission, rather than declaring the accord dead on November 6, because the Commission would almost certainly have voted in his favor and formation would of the unity government would have resulted in the collapse of the regime. Beltran and the Ambassador agreed that Zelaya reacts viscerally without consulting his advisors.

LLORENS